



**Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative (WLCI)
Executive Committee Meeting
Bureau of Land Management State Office
Cheyenne, Wyoming
January 22, 2014**

WLCI – Executive Committee (EC) members/alternates present:

- Jason Fearneyhough, Wyoming Department of Agriculture, Vice-Chair
- Melanie Fullman, U.S.D.A. Forest Service
- Wally Johnson, County Commissioners (counties within WLCI boundary)
- John Keck, National Park Service
- Astrid Martinez, U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Mary Thoman, County Conservation Districts (Area 5)
- Mark Sattleburg, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Max Ethridge, U.S. Geological Survey
- Tyler Abbott, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Alternate
- Mark Fowden, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Alternate
- Frank D’Erchia, U.S. Geological Survey, Alternate

WLCI – Coordination Team (CT) members present:

- Pat Anderson, U.S. Geological Survey
- Amy Nicholas, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Genevieve Skora, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Jim Wasseen, Wyoming Game and Fish Department
- Justin Caudill, Wyoming Department of Agriculture
- Eric Decker, Bureau of Land Management
- Erica Cressall, Bureau of Land Management

Others present:

- Zack Bowen, U.S. Geological Survey
- Renee Dana, Bureau of Land Management Retired, Associate Member
- John Kilpatrick, U.S. Geological Survey
- Eric Norelius, Bureau of Land Management
- Mark Storzer, Bureau of Land Management
- Nicole Korfanta, Haub School - University of Wyoming
- Ian Glander, Bureau of Land Management
- Laura Weatherford, U.S. Representative Cynthia Lummis’ Office
- Steve Germaine, U.S. Geological Survey
- Kristi Wallin, U.S. Senator John Barasso’s Office

January 22, 2014

Meeting was called to order at 8:07 a.m. by Vice-Chairman Jason Fearneyhough. Mark Storzer conveyed Don Simpson's apologies that he would be unable to attend the meeting. Vice-Chairman Fearneyhough welcomed everyone; introductions were made, and reviewed the day's agenda.

Executive Committee Roundtable

USFWS – Working on substantial candidate conservation agreements, state-wide sage-grouse Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA), with a companion Candidate Conservation Agreement (CCA) for Federal lands. A budget handout was provided by Mark Sattleburg and projected funding was discussed. Endangered species funding did increase.

USFS – Melanie Fullman has just recently been appointed to the EC by Cheryl Chatham. There will be an estimated 5-7% budget cut for FY14.

WDA – Awaiting legislation to set the budget. There have been additional requests for predator control and wild horse funding. The wild horse population will be approached from a wildlife and agricultural stand point when considering control. Doug Miyamoto has been named interim CEO on the livestock board.

County Conservation Districts – Encourage executives to attend an LPDT meeting. Recommended that a retreat environment be provided for the June EC meeting to allow for more informal discussions amongst EC members. WLCI helps to maximize the conservation projects and their efforts. It is important that a member of the EC be involved in the hiring of the new coordinator.

County Commissioners – Anadarko has discussed the Bitter Creek head cut and its liabilities. There are still ongoing discussions about the property ownership. There is a proposal for a natural gas well to be put onto Little Mountain and it would be an exploratory well.

BLM – Currently awaiting approval to advertise the WLCI Coordinator position from the Washington D.C. Office.

USGS – Max Ethridge is assuming the duties for Randy Updike who has retired. WLCI is one of the best models around for the coordination of projects. Frank D'Erchia has retired but has returned to help on a part-time basis with WLCI. Suzette Kimball was nominated as the next USGS director. The USGS budget will be about the same as 2013.

NPS – Susan Masica has been named the new regional director for the Intermountain Region of the NPS. Budgets are still in question but will be better than anticipated.

WGFD – This year's budget will be a flat budget, with 17 positions being cut but the WLCI coordinator position was retained.

NRCS – Astrid Martinez expects the budget to be available very soon. The current farm bill will have an extension. The new farm bill will hopefully be able to be put into effect the same day it is signed. NRCS is looking to do more conservation projects on the ground this year.

Congressional Updates

The congressional delegates were invited to provide any updates or comment from their respective offices.

Kristi Wallin, representing U.S. Senator John Barrasso's Office, stated that Senator Barrasso conveyed his appreciation of all the collaboration and involvement between local and federal groups. He continues to support WLCI and its efforts.

U.S. Senator Mike Enzi's Office sent correspondence conveying the Senator's continued support of WLCI and that he too is working on several acts in Washington, DC, that could affect the WLCI area, such as the Sportsmen Act and Restoring Healthy Forests Act.

Laura Weatherford, representing U.S. Representative Cynthia Lummis' Office, read a letter provided by Representative Lummis (filed). The representative stated she continues to support WLCI as it continues to lead the way with meaningful dialogue between land managers, land owners, and permittees. Representative Lummis is a member of the Endangered Species Working Group.

Partner Collaboration

Nicole Korfanta, Director of the Ruckelshaus Institute, a division of the University of Wyoming's (UW) Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources

Nicole Korfanta provided an overview of the numerous programs and initiatives of the Ruckelshaus Institute and its relationship with the Haub School at UW. There were discussions about possible collaborations between WLCI and the Energy Mitigation Research and Outreach Initiative and Open Spaces Initiative. The [Energy Mitigation Research and Outreach Initiative](#) gathers and synthesizes information on mitigation practices intended to ameliorate the consequences of landscape-scale energy development to wildlife populations. They work with information from federal, state, non-profit, and industry partners, we are working to improve understanding of wildlife mitigation options, successes, and challenges.

Nicole provided three information booklets to the EC as examples of their work. These booklets included information on market-based wildlife mitigation, wind energy wildlife mitigation, and natural gas development and wildlife mitigation. As part of the Open Spaces Initiative, they recently published a document which describes land ownership patterns, land-use activities and functions, and the drivers behind recent land-use patterns and development trends. This document, "Understanding Wyoming's Land Resources: Land-Use Patterns and Development Trends" is available at: http://www.uwyo.edu/haub/ruckelshaus-institute/_files/docs/open-spaces/2013-land-use-patterns.pdf. Collaborative opportunities that were discussed included the sharing of WLCI related science information and data, information associated with WLCI habitat projects and

possible collaborations to update the WLCI online Energy Citation Database and possible opportunities for interns to be involved with habitat projects and science projects.

Review/Approve September Minutes

Motion to Approve September's Minutes – Motion was made by Mary Thoman, and seconded by Wally Johnson. The motion passed.

MOU

The MOU has been signed by all executives. Attachment D needs to be updated with the current EC members.

Annual Report

Mary Thoman requested that the vision statement be added to the FY13 and future annual reports. The addition of an explanation of leveraging on page 25 was also requested.

Motion to Approve FY13 Annual Report with amendments – Motion was made by Max Ethridge and seconded by Mark Sattleburg. The motion passed.

Budget Update

BLM – Ian Glander reported the budget for WLCI does not include salaries. The cost share amounts are what were reported by project proponents. The FY14 budget is expected late February or March which will lead to a more definitive WLCI budget. There was a mistake in the fisheries allocation dollars and the Washington office is looking to fix the \$0 amount for FY14.

USGS budget – Frank D'Erchia provided overview of the estimated USGS budget (USGS Budget Handout).

USFWS Budget – Mark Sattleburg provided an update on the USFWS budget and provided an additional handout.

Sub-Committee Team Updates

Pat Anderson stated that there will be a business team meeting, January 24, 2014 at the Wyoming Game and Fish Office at 9:00 AM to discuss the roles and responsibilities of each team associated with WLCI.

Amy Nicholas provided an update for the Science and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC). STAC will be participating in the Business team meeting, January 24, 2014. They are still looking for more members. The STAC approached the Wyoming Chapter of The Wildlife Society (TWS), about cosponsoring the 2015 Science Workshop.

Genevieve Skora provided an update for the Communication Team (CommT). The CommT continues to work on the Focus Community factsheets and updating the webpage. A

standardized template for PowerPoint presentations has been developed and can be obtained from Shelley Gregory, ssgregory@blm.gov. It will be posted to the website.

Please send notice of any upcoming events that need to be posted onto the website calendar to the WLCI general mailbox, wlc_i_wymail@blm.gov. The website calendar will be updated regularly, please visit the site to stay up to date.

Coordination Team Activities

Quarterly accomplishments were provided and the CT highlighted specific events. The website calendar (www.wlci.gov) will be the most update calendar for WLCI and is updated immediately upon receipt of an event notification.

Science Workshop

Frank D'Erchia gave an overview of the science workshop and its planning. The STAC met with the Wyoming Chapter of TWS Board to discuss the possibility of cosponsoring a workshop in 2015; however, the current TWS administration will not be in the same positions in 2015. The current TWS administration will continue to work with WLCI and future TWS Board members to come to a resolution.

Travel is a problem; it was suggested to stay away from winter months and close to the WLCI area (Lander or Riverton). A concern was mentioned about when WLCI would know when the board for TWS accepts the proposed plan. Assurances will be needed that TWS will continue to go along with the proposed plan for the science workshop.

Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) Overview

CCAA presentation by Tyler Abbott - USFWS

The Greater Sage-Grouse is currently a candidate species, due to the USFWS' March 23, 2010 finding of warranted, but precluded. CCAAs are agreements between the FWS and private landowners. Landowners voluntarily agree to implement conservation measures to benefit a candidate species (the sage-grouse), in return the FWS agrees that if the species is listed as a threatened or endangered species; the FWS will not require additional money or land commitments by the landowner or implementation of additional conservation measures. The landowner would get a Section 10(a)(1)(A) permit that would allow a certain amount of take that may occur as a result of the landowner's normal, lawful actions (farming, ranching, etc.).

Federal agencies/land cannot participate under a CCAA as they are required by Federal law to consult with the USFWS on whether a project will affect threatened, endangered, proposed species or critical habitat of a listed or proposed species. However, a Federal agency can enter into a CCA (Candidate Conservation Agreement) with the USFWS. This would allow private landowners to implement the same conservation measures on both their private lands and the Federal lands that they have a grazing permit (or other Federal nexus).

The FWS is currently working on several other CCAAs, (e.g., Thunder Basin Grasslands

Ecosystem Association (TBGPEA CCAA). Additionally, the FWS has been approached by several other landowners, companies, and groups that are interested in developing CCAs.

Ruby Update

WLCI asked 1st Interstate Bank in December of 2010 to structure a bond fund portfolio that would allow the Ruby projects to be funded through the Ruby monies that were stored in the Wyoming Wildlife Fund. Currently, there are four bonds that will be maturing in 2014 and going into the money market fund as available cash to pay for projects. Approximately \$170,000 worth of bonds will be maturing in late summer and early fall of this year. The Wyoming Community Foundation and 1st Interstate Bank charge management fees. In 2013, the management fees were approximately \$39,000. The bond fund has made nearly \$49,000 in 2013. Money in the Ruby fund needs to be fully obligated by October of 2015.

Ian Glander provided an overview of the Ruby Pipeline budget (Handout 6).

Erik Norelius provided a presentation on the history and current standing on the Ruby Pipeline projects. Justin Caudill brought forward the need to complete a Ruby project overview by the summer of 2015 to summarize the Ruby projects and their accomplishments.

Two new projects were discussed and submitted for review and approval of Ruby funds.

Wally Johnson moved that we fund the Sage-Grouse Mortality Due to Ravens Study at \$32,000. Mary Thoman seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Mark Sattleberg moved to fund the Gizzard Envy Study at \$25,000. Seconded by Wally. Motion passed.

Easement Discussion

In August 2012 - the EC Board determined that we want to continue to fund easements, but at a maximum of \$50,000/year. This could be for one easement or multiple. Kent Connelly previously stated at the WLCI EC meeting in August of 2013 that the easements were recorded in the county courthouses. There is a National Conservation Easement Database, <http://nced.conservancyregistry.org/>. Wally Johnson & Mary Thoman will check on reporting of easements at the county courthouses. Astrid Martinez will check on her agency's agreement with WyGIS on the reporting of easements.

A brief discussion of WLCI's Ecosystem Services (ES) tool was led by Justin Caudill, describing how WLCI can/could influence improvements and protections on private lands towards habitat and wildlife needs. The Sibert Ranch project was also brought up as WLCI's first opportunity for an ES project. The project was approved by the WLCI EC in 2012; the CT is still working to get an assistantship agreement in place to fund the project.

Bitter Creek Headcut

A discussion concerning the ownership of the Bitter Creek Headcut was conducted. The item at hand was tabled for the next board meeting, awaiting information to be gathered by Mark Storzer concerning BLM easements and contracting policies about the matter.

Public Comment Period

No public asked to speak.

Next EC Meeting

A Doodle Poll will be sent out for the EC meeting in June 2014. County Commissioners cannot meet the first or third Tuesday. According to the MOU, the EC will meet 3 times annually. Mary Thoman brought up the idea of a retreat for the June meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 3:05 pm.

Action Items

- Doodle Poll for June EC Meeting
- Attachment D of MOU updated with current EC members
- Amendments to FY13 Annual Report completed
- Update of EC mailing list with new members
- Wally Johnson & Mary Thoman will check on reporting of easements at the county courthouses
- Astrid will check on her agency's agreement with WyGIS on the reporting of easements
- Mark Storzer to research BLM easements and contracting policies concerning Bitter Creek Headcut